

**NIAGARA FALLS: THE REPORT OF
THE NEW YORK STATE SURVEY (1880)**

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THE NEW YORK STATE SURVEY (1880)**

[Including a discussion and evaluation of the Gardner Report]

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In Governor Robinson's message to the legislature in January, 1879 (Robinson, in Report of the Executive Committee of the Niagara Falls Association, 1885), specific reference was made to the protection of visitors, and, although New York and Ontario had civil jurisdiction over the Falls of Niagara, yet "in one sense, the sublime exhibition of natural power there witnessed is the property of the whole world." That there was an agenda already in place is referred to by the sentence: "There can be no doubt that many persons abstain from visiting the Falls in consequence of the annoyances referred to, nor can there be any reasonable doubt that the removal of these objections would largely increase the number of visitors annually." As already discussed in the previous section, there was competition between the Canadian and American cities by the cataracts for the money visitors brought with them in their desire to see the falls. There was extensive building and expansion of commercial enterprises and the introduction of rival spectacles and entertainments to lure increasing crowds to the tourist infrastructure in place in the prospect areas of both countries. In one sense, Robinson's message was not only an appeal to protect the ephemeral visitor population at the Falls, but an appeal to devise a plan to "increase the number of visitors annually." It appears that Robinson's message was protective of the tourist industry in place at Niagara - and a plan should be devised for its intelligent regulation. No reference is made to industrial development, except perhaps for the criticism that the "most favorable points of observation around the Falls are appropriated for purposes of private profit," this as distinct from the shores which "swarm with sharpers, hucksters and peddlers, who perpetually harass all visitors." No reference is made either to a deteriorating environment and its restoration.

However, there are two published versions of Robinson's 1879 message to the Legislature. The one quoted above by the Niagara Falls Association, to be discussed below, and one, presumably the official one, as it is a Senate document, contained in the first annual report of the Commissioners of the Niagara Reservation published in 1885. In this second version of the message, the remarks of Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada, with whom Robinson collaborated on introduction of the Niagara issue to their respective legislatures, are included. Robinson acknowledged that it was actually Dufferin's

idea for an international park, "inclosing a suitable space on each side of the river from which all the annoyances and vexations referred to should be excluded." Furthermore, in this park there should be "no attempt at landscape ornamenting in the vain hope of adding anything to the natural attractions of the falls," and that such areas are "to be kept sacred to the free use" of international visitors. Dufferin could not envision why such a plan would cost much - it would simply be an undeveloped area, requiring little capital investment by the respective governments, "but with a mutual understanding as to the general regulations to be enforced on either side." It is interesting that Dufferin's reference to the environment was deleted from the executive report of the Niagara Association, as was the fact that it was Dufferin who made the suggestion to Robinson. Dufferin's proposal that there be an international park with mutually agreed upon rules of operation was also deleted. The reason for the deletion by the Niagara Association appears to have been because the men who came together in New York City and formed the Niagara Association to promote legislation to protect the falls in the New York Legislature "decided to give up the international park idea because of the difficulty of meshing New York's moves with Canada's and to appeal instead for public backing of a plan to buy the land around the falls for a state reservation" (Roper, 1973, according to correspondence between Olmsted and Charles Elliot Norton in 1882).

The Legislature did not hesitate to respond "by a joint resolution of the Legislature of that year" (1879) to direct the Commissioners of the New York State Survey "to inquire, consider and report what, if any, measures it may be expedient for the State to adopt for carrying out the suggestions contained in the annual message of the Governor with respect to Niagara Falls" (Report of the Executive Committee of the Niagara Falls Association, 1885). The Commissioners were W. A. Wheeler, Robert S. Hale, William Dorsheimer, Francis A. Stout, George Geddes (son of James Geddes, engineer of the Erie Canal - the son being a specialist in law, engineering and farming,) and F.A.P. Barnard, President of Columbia College (Roper, 1973).

Director of the New York State Survey at the time was James T. Gardner, who was directed "to make an examination of the premises, and prepare for their consideration such a project ... and they associated with him Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted" (Rep. of the Exec. Comm, Nia. Falls Assn., 1885). Note that the spelling of Mr. Gardner's name here follows that used in the final report submitted to the Legislature in 1880 - it is sometimes spelled Gardner or Gardener. The resolution laid out an agenda that was a striking contrast to that presumably proposed by Robinson, according to the Niagara Association. The response of the New York State Legislature promoted an environmental, not a tourist, agenda, that is, the entire point of all interest was the integrity of that area the tourists were visiting. The intent of the legislation was not to provide for tourists, but to protect the object of their interest and the freedom to enjoy that object without distraction.

The State Legislature appointed the Commissioners and Gardner and Olmsted to determine "how far the private holding of land about Niagara Falls has worked to public disadvantage through defacements of the scenery; to determine the character of such defacements; to estimate the tendency to greater injury, and, lastly to consider whether the proposed action by the State is necessary to arrest

the process of destruction and restore to the scenery its original character" (Report of the Executive Committee of the Niagara Falls Association, 1885). Note that "scenery" here is essentially synonymous with "environment" and is botanical in character, as will be seen below.

In that same year, the Commissioners, Gardner and Olmsted came to the area and contributed their findings, which, together with the determinations of the Commissioners, were published in 1880 in the Report of the New York State Survey for the year 1879 entitled "Special Report of New York State survey on the Preservation of the Scenery of Niagara Falls, and Fourth Annual Report on the Triangulation of the State for the year 1879." The special report is 42 pages long. In it Governor Robinson's full message to the Legislature is included, together with Lord Dufferin's comments.

The Report

The plan for the preservation of the scenery at Niagara Falls is composed of the report of the Commissioners of the New York State Survey, the report of Mr. Gardner, and that of Mr. Olmsted, in addition to two illustrations, a series of heliotype prints, the signatories of a petition in favor of the establishment of the reservation, Governor Robinson's 1879 message and a facsimile reprint of Hennepin's description of the falls at Niagara.

The First Illustration

To give it the most dramatic thrust, the first product of the study is an illustration of the object of the plan, the product of the study itself. It is a fold-out illustration drawn by Francis Lathrop and engraved by a Mr. Marsh entitled "Ideal view of the American Rapids, after the Village Shore and Bath Island are restored, according to the proposed plan." Such a picture was to be shown in contrast with the series of heliotype prints showing the disfigurements to be remedied - the industrial presence on the river banks just above the American Falls and on one of the developed islands in the Goat Island complex - Bath Island.

Presumably this illustration would not have been included or given such prominence had it not been an important part of the intentions of the Commissioners, Mr. Gardner and Mr. Olmsted.

In the drawing, the sight of the City of Niagara Falls is completely masked from view excepting perhaps four church steeples, a possible factory smoke-stack and a tall neo-classical building. These, of course, given that the view drawn is at considerable elevation to an observer on the ground, would be not seen by visitors to the area in question. The shorelines support unbroken masses of vegetation. The mainland shows a closed canopy of deciduous trees giving way to shrubs, smaller trees as perhaps native willows may appear, and Arbor Vitae or Juniper trees on the river margin. The model for this scenery was the intact vegetation of Goat Island.

The banks are not ripped and show irregular erosional effects, including the

slumping slope with a many-stemmed tree group inclining into the river, much as can be seen today on the wet, sagging slopes of the north shore of Goat Island. The trees are of considerable age and show no attempt at pruning: broken major branches are conspicuous on some trees, stems distorted by natural processes are shown, a tall old tree bole with its canopy blasted away by natural events is shown on what is probably Luna Island in the lower right. No attempt at silviculture is evident on the character of the restored forest. Dead trees are an important component of the natural drama. Bath Island, the island upriver shown as accessed by the bridges of the time, is illustrated with its downriver acreage significantly reduced - all its "made land" has been washed away and the island's supposed natural boundaries are restored. Also, the original, primeval arboreal character of the islands and river margins is depicted as dense with coniferous tree species.

Note that in the heliotype print constituting Plate III showing the aspect of Prospect Park in 1879 as seen as looking north across the American Falls from Goat Island, and that the Park is still extensively wooded for all the buildings and other improvements reported to have been constructed on it. The city is completely masked from view by the tree canopy. Gardner, in his accompanying report, praises the cluster of trees there, but deplores the fact that shrub and herbaceous layers, being "rich masses of woodbine," were destroyed in the building of walls and structures.

To resume, there are no roads or paths or structures of any kind shown in the illustration, nor are any human beings shown at all. Note that the shoreline of the mainland does not depict the limestone flats that probably occurred there at the time of the drawing, but perhaps were built over or appeared to the illustrator to represent human degradation of a natural landscape feature but which were, in fact, created by the dynamics of the river itself. Note that the caption said the depiction is an ideal situation. To give the viewer today some idea what the view up the American rapids would look like after restoration, one may stand on one of the two farther bridges on the Three Sisters Islands where the vegetation comes uninterrupted to the river bank, and where most of the developed shoreline in the Canadian and on Goat Island is blocked from view.

The helioprint of the Goat Island shore (Plate IX) gives a poor impression of their grandeur, hence the drawing. In the list of illustrations and maps at the beginning of the report, there is a caption reading "Plates showing the part of the banks of the American Rapids which still remain in natural condition," but it appears that these plates were not included in the final edition printed for distribution in the Legislature. Although the helioprint "photographs" were apparently excellent for views showing degradation of the shoreline, their artistry was completely inadequate to represent the value of the forest beauty - these had to be drawn to be adequately represented.

It is apparent from the illustration that the primeval vegetation exhibited on Goat Island was to be used as a model for the riverbanks and other areas interior to the river. It is within this context that the "improvements" to be suggested by Olmsted and Vaux years later were to be placed and within which tourists would find what they had come miles to find. This was the object of State involvement. Note that, outside of the bridges, there seems to be little

requirement for State revenue to maintain such an environment, or landscape. No pruning, no mowing, no interference. This was in keeping with the plans to return the area to its primitive aspect.

The Report of the Commissioners

The Commissioner's topics proceeded as follows:

1. The duty of the Commissioners was defined as investigation into the defacement of scenery, degradation of landscape, necessity of government action to arrest further deterioration. No reference was made to the duty of the Commissioners to investigate conditions with respect to visitors, but their duty was entirely environmental.

2. Visitor dynamics. The Commissioners discussed certain characteristics of tourist behavior but explicitly state this is "a matter not directly comprehended in the instructions of the Commissioners," which was to correct scenic disfigurements. They addressed this subject due to an extensive "public concern."

First they expressed surprise that the, at that point, still healthy climate of the City of Niagara Falls, its high quality inns, and related services and natural attractions should not be "the temporary residence of great numbers of those who every summer migrate from town to country, and one of the most popular places of vacation sojourn in all the world."

They observed that Niagara has no such summer population, but all visits are short. This was not because of harassment, so frequently touted as the cause, nor a failure on the part of the respective municipalities to control the catch-penny tourist trade - these harassments are also characteristic of some of the most famous tourist attractions in the world, indeed, they experience more predation than at Niagara Falls.

Yet tourists at Niagara are "ill-humored" after their visit for some additional reason, which makes the beggars that appeal to them more intolerable than in tourist sites elsewhere.

The source of the quickness of the stay, and the ease with which disappointment is stimulated was considered due to the nature of the landscape itself. This observation is critical to an understanding of the "best use" of Niagara Falls as a tourist attraction and fully understood by the Commissioners, Gardner and Olmsted. It is one that has been paid little if any attention at all by a century of concerns interested in a tourist industry at Niagara Falls. It is a concern that will be more fully addressed by the present writer in the section on recommendations below.

Flat, glaciated terrain of little note extends right up to the crest of the Niagara Gorge. Only several city blocks away from the falls and gorge there is no

evidence for the existence of the falls, except, today, for a sound that could be that the railroad yards, and an atmospheric cloud that could be taken for vented steam from a factory stack. This may account for the subsequent century-long attempts by various proposers to build up the expectations of the visitor as they cross miles of unremarkable terrain to prepare them for the spectacle they have come miles to see. Unprepared, the visitor may be unable to easily assimilate the extraordinary phenomenon presented and be "unimpressed," that is to say, unable to shake the boredom associated with the monotony of the adjacent and surrounding prairies and lake plain, or, upon leaving, be unable to retain the excitement they did permit themselves - as was the experience of Judge George Clinton when he saw the falls as a youth of eighteen. Topographically uninteresting terrain leading up to the falls, in the present day, for example, exacerbates this lack of interest by the urbanization on all approaches, which intensifies the sameness of visitor experience and deadens their immediate memory. Similar phenomena probably occur wherever the significant natural feature is a canyon worn below the surrounding regional land surface - even the Grand Canyon which also, at least along the south rim, is invisible from the road paralleling it only a few feet away from the lip of the precipice. Elevations, such as mountains, which can be viewed for long distances before they are reached, can stimulate the visitor upon approach and departure in a way that depressions, such as canyons, cannot.

These sentiments were expressed over a century ago by the famous English geologist Charles Lyell (1855):

"In the region between Lake Erie and the borders of Pennsylvania, as well as in that immediately south of Lake Ontario, there is an entire want of fine scenery, as might have been anticipated where all the strata are horizontal. The monotony of the endless forest is sometimes relieved by a steep escarpment, a river with wooded islands, or a lake; but the only striking features in the landscape are the water falls, and the deep chasms hollowed out by them in the course of ages. As the opposite banks of these ravines are on the same level, including that of the Niagara itself, we come abruptly to their edges before we have any suspicion of their existence, and we must travel out of our way to enjoy a sight of them."

As early as 1819, the educated Scotch botanist John Goldie also noted the strange and, to him, unexpected, flatness of the region approaching the falls. "On approaching them I found the ground in their vicinity to exhibit a very different appearance from what I had expected. Instead of high rocks & precipices above the Falls, and low valleys & glens below them, all is perfectly level to appearance. ... At the distance of 200 yds there is nothing to be seen in the banks of the River that would lead you to expect any such thing as Falls at this place" (Goldie, 1819). Goldie is a perfect example of the nature of the ill-humor, or disappointment frequently remarked upon by proponents and developers of the falls alike. Their expectations of Niagara embedded in a terrain of monumentally deformed geology are shattered. If the wind and air pressure is not exactly right at the moment a visitor gets to the falls, no enormous plume of mist is evident, no thundering roar if the wind blows in the wrong direction, no drenching spray. Every attempt by city, state and province to make inaccessible the singular and concentrated natural charms of the cataracts, for example by

permitting helicopter rides whose noise obliterates the sound of the falls, heightens the disappointment factor of the visitor.

The Commissioners had a remedy for this disappointment - to slow the pace of the visitor long enough for the beauties of Niagara's concentrated natural beauty to express themselves. Otherwise, the nearby cities were "well adapted to the bare satisfaction of curiosity in the waterfall."

According to the Commissioners, "the value of Niagara to the world, and that which has obtained for it the homage of so many men whom the world reveres, lies in its power of appeal to the higher emotional and imaginative faculties, and this power is drawn from qualities and conditions too subtle to be known through verbal description." This value can only be appropriated by slowness, by activities and environments promoting a "composed, receptive and contemplative frame of mind." This concept would later be translated into modes of transportation, and later still be abandoned by the administration of the park eventually established at Niagara Falls in the promotion of the automobile and its potential for supporting "the bare satisfaction of curiosity in the waterfall."

3. The Commissioners resumed their environmental conclusions and determined that the "scenery of Niagara Falls has been greatly injured, that the process of injury is continuous and accelerating, and that, if not arrested, it must in time be utterly destructive of its value." The source of the injury was its then present ownership and the decision by that ownership to "strive to make his particular ground yield the largest possible private profit." The Commissioners determined that since the area on which Niagara's charms are concentrated is so small, that any one attack on it has a "fatal [effect] upon its character."

4. The Commissioners recommended the employment of eminent domain to condemn the private properties for the public good, such as "when private ferries are supplanted by free public bridges." This was to reserve such land "to give satisfactory access to the Falls of Niagara and preserve their value."

Based on determinations by Gardner and Olmsted, they recommended that the islands in the river and a bit of land along the riverbank on the mainland be taken for the public good.

It is clear what the Commissioners accepted were Gardner and Olmsted's intentions, that is, their "design":

- a. the buildings in place were to be removed.
- b. the immediate bank of the river "shall be formed so as to have a natural aspect."
- c. Its shoreline was to be protected from erosion by modifications of the slope and "by rough, loosely piled local rock."

d. "Trees and bushes are proposed to be planted":

1. composed of the same species as were native to the area and
2. are to be laid out to conform to the ecosystem structure observable in the unaltered woodlands and riverbanks in the Goat Island complex, that is to say "of such kinds and in such dispositions as are natural to the locality."

e. This ecosystem restoration was to be carried back from the river margin "back to the boundary on the crest of the terrace."

f. The effect was to visually isolate the lands in question completely from the buildings of the village of Niagara Falls. It was to "secure their landscape disconnection with the river."

g. Inside of this "narrow woodland," and "along the rear" of it, about "one hundred feet distant from the water's edge" was to be a road and a walk. From the walk would be constructed "inconspicuous shaded seats commanding views of the rapids" except at Prospect Park where there was to be a "more extended platform overlooking the falls and chasm."

The illustration preceding this discourse appears to clearly express the visual objectives of Gardner and Olmsted's recommendations.

5. The Commissioners made it clear that they accepted Gardner and Olmsted's recommendations as to the limits of the property required to protect the falls, and to the nature of the restoration and preservation of the environment. They concurred with Olmsted, out of "cordiality," as to the use of the reserved land, but "it is not the duty of the Commissioners to advise how it shall be used."

Olmsted urged that the land:

- a. not be used for "general pleasuring," in today's terms, such as picnicking, playing tennis, baseball, frisbee, concerts, helicopters, hot-air balloon rides, roller skating
- b. not be used for ornamental displays, such as gardens (the artificial laying out of exotic species in unnatural arrangements) and monuments.
- c. whatever was to be built was not to break the visual integrity of the natural landscape.

Mr. Olmsted's reasons were based on the understanding that greater numbers of people would eventually have the means to visit the falls. If any one of the preceding three requirements were neglected, such visitation would overwhelm and destroy the natural environment. It was to negate the impact of great visitor numbers that Olmsted made those recommendations.

To protect the considerable value of the native landscape and the landscape restored, the only service the government would be required to provide would be to allow visitors, in comfort and safety, to come, look, and go away. This may

seem like an unnaturally proscribed service to tourists, but the visual environment at Niagara is so rich and awesome, and confined to such a small area, that this use was adequate. Besides, that is what visitors were doing anyway, coming, looking, and quickly departing. Olmsted merely wished to protect the integrity of the object of their experience.

This explains the other illustration included in the special report on the preservation of the scenery at Niagara Falls: "View in the primeval woods, on Goat Island," drawn by Thomas Moran and en-graved by a Mr. Karst (plate X). This plate is not simply a pretty decoration to the text, it illustrates the proper relationship between visitor and scenery (environment) - the scenery to be protected and restored. The walker is solitary and enclosed by a rich and complex forest ecosystem. The visitor is walking, not riding, he is strolling with a cane to assist him in his movements and is completely immersed. The path is a dirt path. The forest was actually so dense at this time that a series of such paths could be built into the forest and walkers would be hidden from one another.

The nearby commercial enterprises in the village were adequate to attend to all other visitor needs, hence Olmsted saw no need for "houses of refreshment, shops, booths, and places of amusement and exhibition." Nor did he see any need for "extensive shelters."

Olmsted did, however, entertain the idea of structures built to improve the ability of visitor-access to views. Visitors came from around the world to do what they could do nowhere else in the world: look on the Niagara River at this place. Olmsted suggested to the Commissioners that "at one or two points something might be gained by the erection of belvederes or prospect towers," perhaps reminiscent of the world famous Terrapin Tower the Porters had taken down as part of the bargain for selling Prospect Park to the Prospect Park Company (Porter, 1900). However, Olmsted was not optimistic about the ability to built something inconspicuous nor commodious enough for the thousands of anticipated visitors.

6. The next paragraph makes reference to Schoellkopf's hydraulic canal. The Commissioners assure the Legislature that it is fully operational. The Porters, who operated the mill on Bath Island, informed the Commissioners that indeed, the hydraulic opportunities on the canal, their "mechanical advantages," were superior to those on the island or "any upon the ground of which it is proposed that the State should take possession." "This would be equally true as to any considerable industrial undertaking" - perhaps a reference to the small scale of the mills already in operation on the riverbank, and the relative insignificance of their displacement. "The provision thus secured can be enlarged, should this ever be required, to any desired extent, and the water power of the falls more economically utilized than if their immediate banks were to be occupied by factories." I interpret this to mean that the canal can be enlarged. Note how Schoellkopf's operations could benefit from the State shutting down milling on the river bank by relocation of milling operations to his hydraulic canal.

The reason why these milling operations occurred between Port Day and the brink of the American Falls was because they were taking advantage, not of the

200-foot head accessible at the Canal Basin, but the rapid 50-foot drop in elevation of the river associated with the ridges (The Cascades) perpendicular to the river bed forming the western boundary of the Chippewa-Grass Island Pool. The hydraulic canal of 1877 and the one built later just upriver of it both diverted water from the pool, above the cascades, exploiting the hydraulic potential of the drop in elevation of the canal bed and the gorge rim, not that of the river. In a sense, the canal and the discharge races at its lower end, were hydraulic analogues of the natural river and falls.

It could not be determined whether the Porters ever actually did relocate their mill on Schoellkopf's canal, or the fate of any of the other mill operations then operating on the riverbank. But then, as will be discussed below, the Porters may have been more interested in establishing a second, rival, canal east of Schoellkopf's.

7. The Commissioners determined that the cost of the land recommended by Gardner and Olmsted would not be excessive since the boundary lines "are so laid down as to leave out, not only the principal water works, factories and shops for which the Falls have given occasion" but also the hotels and other public accommodations.

Furthermore, the State would, if following Olmsted's suggestions, not need to anticipate "costly constructions or elaborate arrangements for the entertainment of the public." And as for the potential for corruption (by whom and from where is not mentioned), there would be no licenses or leases "which might be corruptly dealt with."

8. "Niagara Falls is not simply the crowning glory of the great resources of the State of this class [of natural objects], but the highest distinction of the nation and of the continent."

The continued operation of private enterprise on the riverbanks at Niagara Falls was noted to reduce the overall tourist revenue of the State, the restitution of which would outweigh the depletion of the State treasury through the purchase of those lands.

Future generations were expected to deplore the failure of the State in protecting this distinguished resource. "If we blame the men of a former day for not setting apart when it was the property of the State and might easily have been done, the Falls of Niagara as the Yosemite and the Yellowstone have in our day ..., then how much more culpable shall we be, who knowing their value and perceiving their certain destruction, still refuse to take the necessary measures for their preservation."

It is significant here to understand that Niagara Falls was ranked both physically and politically with the future national parks of Yosemite and Yellowstone - not, for example, with urban parks such as Central Park in New York City, nor the lovely urban parks designed by Olmsted in nearly Buffalo. As a matter of fact, at a time when the federal government was gaining strength and actively seeking custodianship of areas of significant national landscape, such as Yosemite and

Yellowstone, it is curious that the federal government was not sought out to intervene - especially when the political head of federal Canada, not the provincial leader, who was Oliver Mowat, appeared to be interested in the protection of Niagara.

Roper (1973) appears to settle this question:

"In recommending the proposal, Mowat advised that the governments of the Dominion of Canada and of the United States should be regarded as the actual principals. While the rich state of New York could well afford to represent the United State's interest, Ontario had too limited revenues to assume a similar burden in connection with what was a national responsibility. That the preservation of the falls was such [i.e., a national responsibility] was surely clear from the fact that the Niagara River was navigable water under dominion control and an international boundary" (from a copy of a letter Oliver Mowat wrote to [Lord Lorne], 9 December, Box 31). The Canadians understood that it was to be the Dominion Government, rather than the Province of Ontario, which would foot the bill for botanical restoration "since it" rather than the Province "claimed jurisdiction over most of the lands involved" (Way, 1946). Note that some in the State of New York did not think the State could adequately represent the United States in this issue and opposed passage of the 1885 bill in the Legislature establishing the Reservation in law (Welch, no date).

9. The Commissioners held a conference with the "members of the ministry of the Province of Ontario in September last," with Oliver Mowat as Prime Minister of Ontario.

They met on September 27 in company with Gardner and Olmsted. "'The general outlines of a scheme which I presented was fully approved by all,' Olmsted wrote [Charles Elliot] Norton. Oliver Mowat ... and one of the commissioners, reported on it to Lord Lorne, successor to Lord Dufferin. Only those arrangements were to be made that were necessary to restore and preserve the natural character of the scenery; it was not intended to make a park or artificial enclosures. The reservation [for State and Province] was to include the islands above the falls and a strip on either side of the river, wide enough for planting to screen out the buildings behind it, from the head of the rapids downstream to the railroad suspension bridge. A modest fee, to defray expenses, would probably be levied on sightseers" (Roper, 1973, from a copy of a letter Oliver Mowat wrote to [Lord Lorne], 9 December, Box 31).

After the report of the Commissioners was written, they received news that "the legislature of Ontario has taken preliminary action for the purpose" and noted this in a footnote.

Ontario, however, wanted the Dominion to carry through with the Canadian part of the reservation "under the limitations of their governmental system." A legal, rather than economic reason is referred to (see discussion under number 8, above).

On the New York side, "it is not necessary to point out the respects which would make it unsuitable for New York to appeal to the Federal government to relieve

her from whatever expense the matter may involve. It is sufficient to say that many considerations of State pride as well as of constitutional difficulty, make it clear that if the American part of this work is to be done at all, it must be done by New York alone."

This insistence on the exclusion of the federal government from protection of Niagara Falls, even in the context of federal protection of other national natural treasures such as Yosemite, has been repeated for decades by the Niagara Reservation administration, but the present writer has never found any other reason for it than some reference to "State pride."

The Commissioners reassure the Legislature that the Canadians would cooperate in the legislation to make an international park. In fact, an Act passed "by the Legislature of Ontario in March, 1880, entitled 'An Act respecting Niagara Falls and the adjacent territory'" (Statute of the Province of Ontario, 43 Vict., cap. 13) stated that Canada would, in cooperation with the State of New York, "restore the scenery about the Falls to its natural condition and at the same time afford travelers facilities for observing the points of interest in the neighbourhood" (Way, 1946).

10. The Commission recommended that the Legislature "take such action ... to acquire the lands" under discussion, and to appoint a Commission to deal with the legal matters in so doing.

The Report of Mr. Gardner to the Commissioners of the State Survey

Gardner began by emphasizing Lord Dufferin's role in initiating legislative action to protect the falls at Niagara, being "first looked upon rather as an expression of philanthropic sentiment than an earnest proposal of a practical measure." That Dufferin may have been "unduly moved" by witnessing visitors persecuted by the peddlers and beggars rife at the falls was considered a motivation with which his critics had no sympathy. Obviously to move to create a reservation required more profound motivation than that, perhaps it being presumed that people could take care of themselves after all. Governor Robinson's motives were environmental: he "appealed to the pride of the people to protect this great and beautiful gift of nature from being degraded into a show ... while the shores, once forest-clad, became mill-sites and places of amusement."

Gardner defined Niagara Falls: the rapids (cascades), the islands in the river, the falls and the plunge pool. He emphasized the quality of the remaining woods and the quality of the experience still to be had, but threatened by the imposition of development: the mill on Bath Island.

Verbally Gardner contrasted the positive and the negative:

Positive: picturesque clusters of evergreens, rich overhanging

foliage, deep woods seclusion, surrounded by the influences of nature, graceful woods, banks rich in verdure and overhung with stately trees, pebbly shores, graceful ferns, trailing vines, a mighty torrent writhing and foaming in fury.

Negative: paper mill, started in an "evil hour," unsightly sheds and buildings, disfigurations by wing-dams and ice barriers, the mill an abomination, blank stone walls with sewer-like openings through which tail-races discharge, timber crib work, advertisements, ranks of buildings in all stages of preservation and decay, hotels, mills, carpenter shops, stables, bazaars, ice-houses, laundries, bath houses, rookeries, fences, patent medicine signs, ruin, confusion, solid ugliness.

Later, the State would acquire the "Tugby Bazaar building, the brick and stone shops, the pulp mill and machinery, and the Rapids Hotel building," and sell at least six frame buildings, a planing shop, flouring mill, boat house, bath house, stone foundry, barn, shed, stone house, wing of a hotel building, ice house, store, shop buildings, mill flumes, old fences and lumber. These were "three dwellings, four mills, two hotel buildings, two stores, five stables, two ice houses, one stone house, one pump house and one bath house, beside a number of sheds, and many fences" (2 Ann Rep Comm, 1886). One of the mills was the Witmer mill, and one of the sales, later in 1886, was an "Edison electric light plant" (3 Ann Rep Comm, 1887).

Gardner naively assumed the permanence of the liquid landscape: "The Falls themselves man cannot touch." This is because the hydraulic canal was barely operational and had not yet tested its ability to divert water from the river. Perhaps its owners had not yet computed to the square foot the amount of water it could rent to those using water in their mill sites situated on the canal. Gardner confined his discussion to the destruction of the "beautiful frame of foliage" at the Falls.

Loss of foliage creates "deep feelings of regret and even of resentment" on intelligent visitors. "The chasm below the Cataract depends for its impressiveness largely upon the wooded character of the debris slopes and the maintaining of a fringe of verdure along the very brink of the precipice." These elements are "essential to the perfection of the landscape." Note that in the heliotype print of the Canadian side as seen across the brink of the Horseshoe Falls how destitute of vegetation is the bank of earth behind the buildings in the foreground. Today, this embankment is heavily wooded with trees of considerable age. Note, except for the canopies of scattered trees down on the embankment, the complete lack of trees on the top of the embankment.

The only acreage left with its original forest was Goat Island - if the State did not purchase it, even this would be lost. The Porters had to and were in the very process of selling it "owing to a partition suit now in progress." Gardner gave a list of developments proposed for the island, no doubt prepared, according to subsequent literature published by a member of that family (Porter, 1900), by the family itself.

Note at this juncture how helpful the Porter family was being in assisting the

Commissioners, Gardner and Olmsted in preparing arguments in favor of the State buying their land, first in the case of their milling operations on Bath Island, as discussed above (section 6), and now in the case of Goat Island itself. It appears as though the Porters were leaving their water-front properties at the brink of the American Falls - but perhaps not those upriver of the entrance to Schoellkopf's hydraulic canal.

Gardner again specified the environmental nature of the State's role: "to restore to all the river shores something of their original character."

Gardner cited several examples of government setting aside land for public protection: the Yosemite valley, 1865, the "great tract covering the region of the Yellowstone Geysers - a National Park, the land occupied by the California Big Trees, and, in New York State, the Islands of Lake George."

Gardner chastised the State for selling any of the five-mile strip of land along the Mile Strip embracing the falls of the Niagara River. He urged that "the spot [be] restored by planting to its former beauty," that the mainland strip be planted with trees so that "the whole village may be shut out from view - 'planted out'" and the banks restored to their present appearance on Goat Island.

The utility of including both the drawing described above, showing the restored view, and the heliotype prints showing the developed condition of the riverbank was explained: "To realize the total change that the carrying out of this plan would make in the aspects of Niagara, those who are not familiar with the scene may compare the accompanying photographs of the village shore with the picture of the same ground as it will appear when restored according to our plan [my emphasis].

These illustrations were not decorations but served a definite purpose.

Gardner recommended that the State also purchase the debris slopes on the mainland section "for the purpose of preserving and restoring the woods that border this part of the river."

"We also recommend that the right be secured to plant and maintain a narrow belt of trees with a walk at least a mile in length along the edge of the cliff below the suspension bridge. This planted belt need not be over twenty five or thirty feet broad. Its trees will clothe the barren nakedness of the cliff edge and partially screen out mills and unsightly structures from the river views, and at the same time afford shade to visitors enjoying the profound impressions of this part of the chasm." The State need not buy the land but only secure a right to plant and preserve. The property belongs to the Hydraulic Power and Canal Company and is to be used for Mills. The walls of these mills will be set back from the cliff, their wheel pits only being sunk at the edge of the precipice. There will be few of these pits, and they can be easily bridged for the proposed walk. The President of the Company owning this property [Jacob Schoellkopf, according to Adams, 1927] has assured us that he will willingly cede the desired right to the State."

Gardner urged that a board of commissioners be set up to assess the value of

lands slated for condemnation under the right of eminent domain.

Prior to the era of the railways, only the rich enjoyed Niagara. Now everyone could. A total of 100,000 people visited the falls in 1897. Ownership by the government would make the area open to all citizens.

Again, Gardner urged the illustration showing the objective of his and Olmsted's design be examined: "Although truthful in the general impression conveyed, such a view cannot, of course, be accurate in detail."

The Goat Island forest is a living monument of history, and so facsimiles of Hennepin's description and illustration are included in the report, "this first recorded visit of a white man to the Falls." The ancient trees on Goat Island have witnessed all the history of the past two hundred years, they are "the only living witnesses" of the passage of history at the falls and must be preserved. One cannot help but wonder if this interesting historical perspective was provided by the Porters, who obviously consulted with both Commissioners, as noted above, and Olmsted and Gardner. Albert Porter had written a short pamphlet published sometime after 1875 detailing the history of the village and the Porter fortunes there, and some of Gardner's historic sentiments reappear in Peter A. Porter's history of Goat Island published for the Legislature in 1900.

Gardner ends with the declaration of the value of the geologic environment of the Falls for study: "the conclusions to be attained by accurate geological study of the region open almost limitless views into far-reaching vistas of the continent's physical history."

The value of the scenery, associated history and opportunity for scientific study may be preserved by the State against the values of "money-getters," the "axe of the mill-man," the "purveyor of public amusements," that is, the present owners of the riverbank properties.

The Report of Mr. Olmsted to the Commissioners of the State Survey

It was Mr. Olmsted's opinion that "most of the people of Niagara [are those] to whom it appears that the waterfall have so supreme an interest to the public that what happens to the adjoining scenery is of trifling consequence." His opinion derives from personal experience with local opinion. "Were all the trees cut away, quarries opened in the ledges, the banks packed with hotels and factories, and every chance-open space occupied by a circus tent, the falls would still, these think, draw the world to them." This opinion, indicated Olmsted, derived from profit alone as the sole value.

Olmsted cautioned that because visitors use the arrangements made for them, they must be considered a captive market. Their use of the facilities should not be taken as their acceptance of their approval.

Over the course of forty-five years of occasional visiting Niagara Falls, Olmsted recalled a gradual quickening of pace throughout this time. Visitors originally alighted from their carriages and made expeditions into the natural areas over

the course of several days. It was because they were hurried along by tourist-related "services" that the duration of their stays decreased.

Olmsted gave an extended quote from "Alpine Flowers" by William Robinson (1875) who provided a lavish description of the natural environment about the Falls. Olmsted identified two of the world's most distinguished students of botanical science, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker of Kew Gardens, and Dr. Asa Gray of Harvard, as expressing their appreciation of the exotic diversity of the vegetation in the Goat Island complex, and Olmsted, referring to his extensive travels in the American southwest throughout the rich forests of the Appalachian mountains, has found no example of forest beauty to match that on Goat Island.

He owed this extraordinary condition of the flora to its extraordinary situation beside the cataracts of the Niagara River and discussed various atmospheric reasons for the luxurious beauty of the Goat Island forest.

Olmsted ended his section by a quote from the Duke of Argyle who became nearly prostrate with delight by standing in one single vista up the rapids from the falls. Otherwise, he rested his case on the statements made by the Commissioners and by Mr. Gardner, made, where appropriate, at his recommendation.

The "Memorial addressed to the Governor of New York and the Governor-General of Canada"

This is the result of a petition. Lord Dufferin is given exclusive attribution for the political suggestion that there be an international park at the falls of Niagara.

The undersigned universally deplored the de-foliation of Niagara's river banks and the development arising in their place.

There followed a list of the world's luminaries in society and culture, including the Vice-President of the United States, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and perhaps all of the Associate Justices, the Chief Justice Court of Appeals, Canada, the Judge of the Queen's Bench, United States Senators, an Admiral, and so forth.

Then follow English men of letters such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and famous Americans such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry W. Longfellow, and so forth. It is an extraordinary list of contemporaries of the greatest prestige. Western New York's own Josiah Letch-worth, George W. Clinton and William Dorsheimer appear, and so was the manufacturer Pascal P. Pratt, who sat on the Board of Parks Commissioners and was central to the plan to bring Olmsted to Buffalo to distinguish the city with a series of urban parks under his design (Brown & Watson, 1982).

The report concluded with a facsimile of the pages of Hennepin's book with his description of the falls, and a reprinting of Governor Robinson's message to the New York State Legislature of January 9, 1879.



"Ideal view of the American Rapids after the Village Shore and Bath Island are restored."

ARBOREAL ELEMENTS IN THE RESTORED ECOSYSTEM AS
CONCEPTUALIZED BY OLMSTED AND
GARDNER.

Unmanaged woodland.

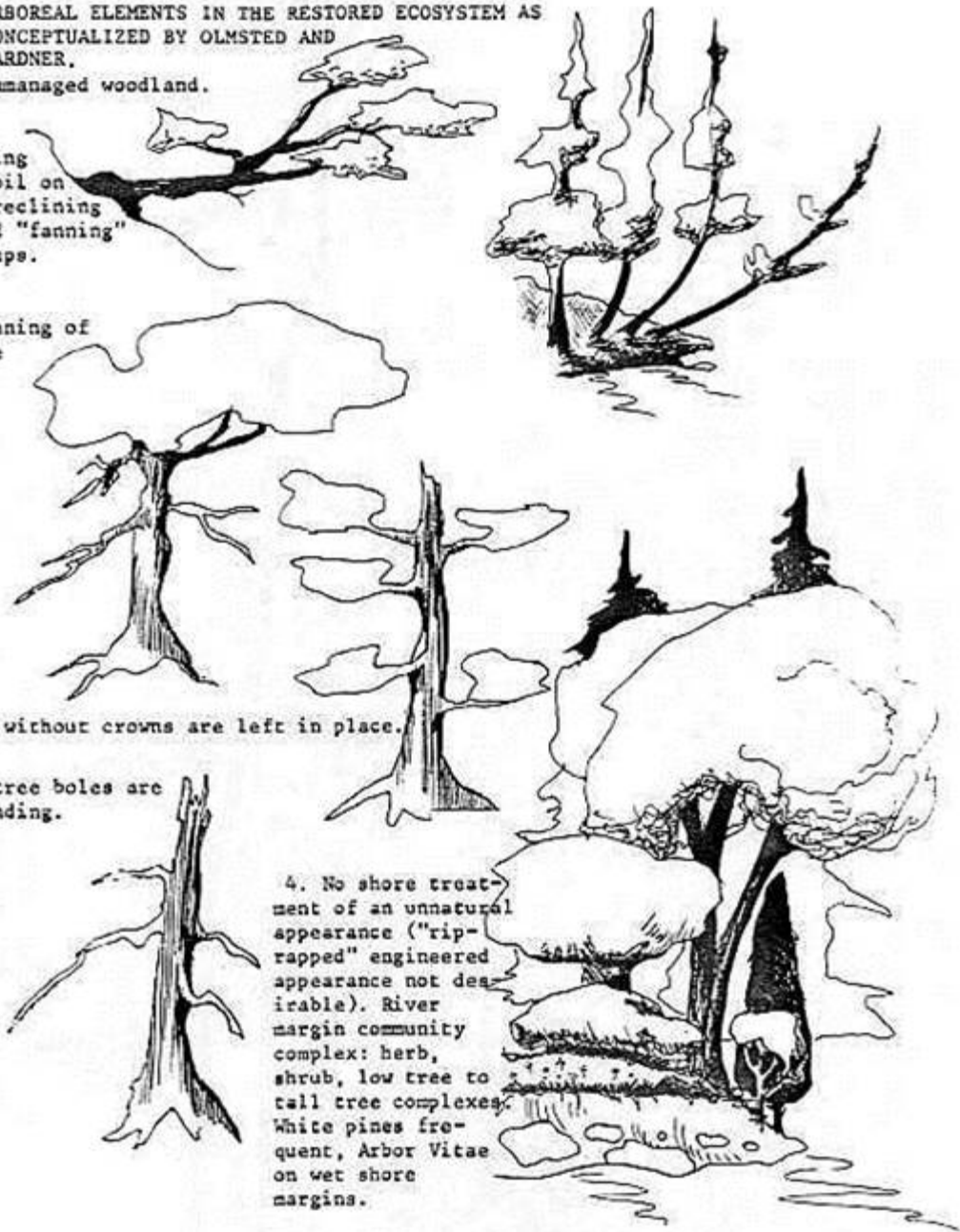
1. Slumping
of wet soil on
shores: reclining
trees and "fanning"
tree groups.

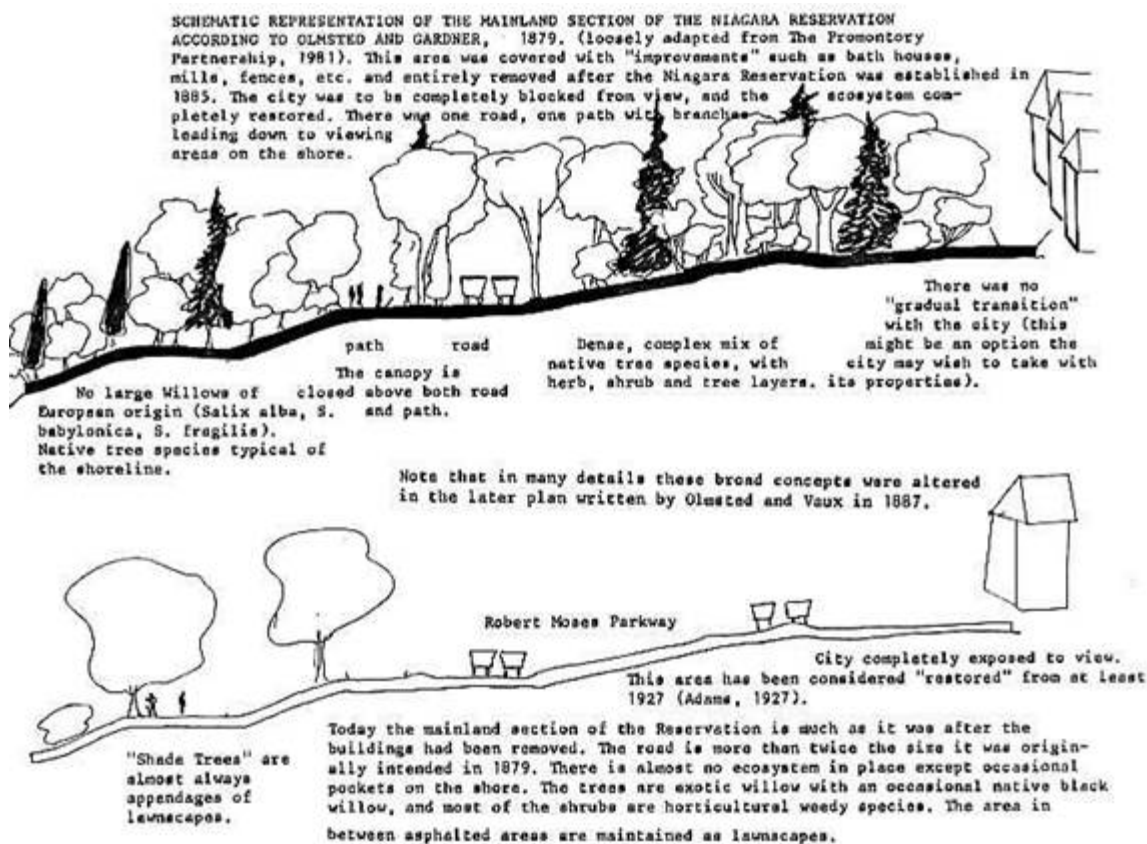
2. No pruning of
dead tree
limbs.

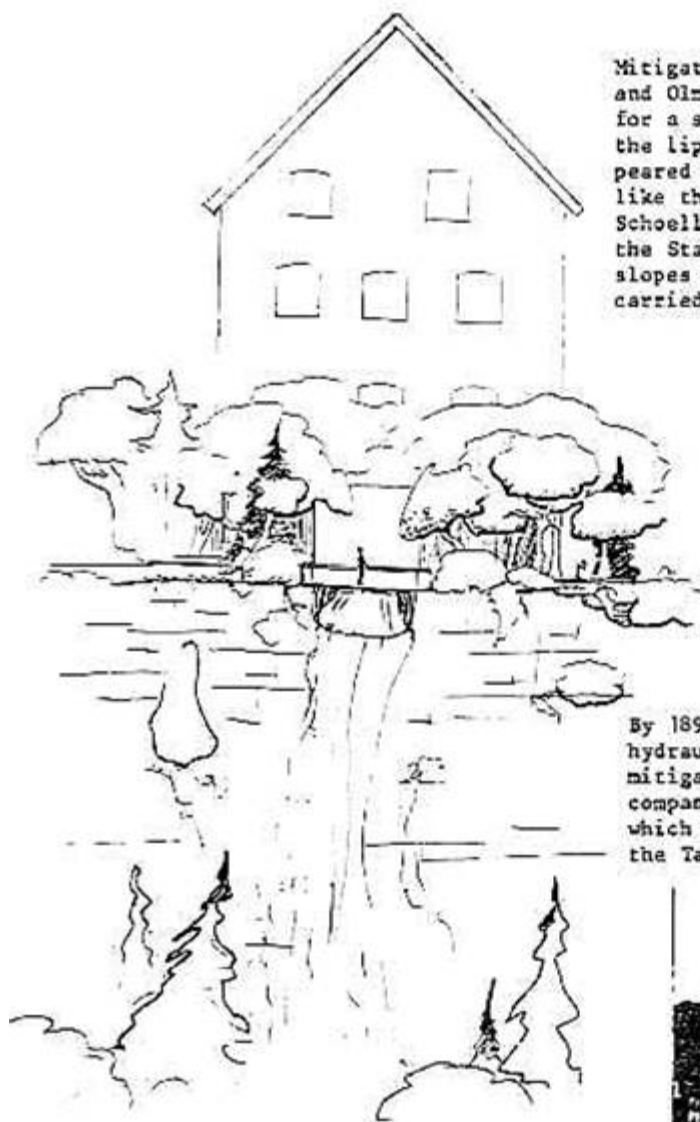
3. Trees without crowns are left in place.

4. Dead tree boles are
left standing.

4. No shore treat-
ment of an unnatural
appearance ("rip-
rapped" engineered
appearance not des-
irable). River
margin community
complex: herb,
shrub, low tree to
tall tree complexes.
White pines fre-
quent, Arbor Vitae
on wet shore
margins.



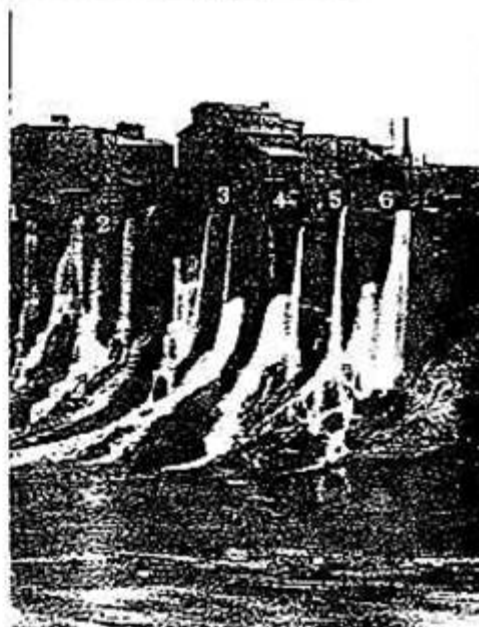




Mitigations suggested by Gardner and Olmsted to Jacob Schoellkopf for a strip of land running along the lip of the gorge may have appeared in imagination something like this. Although in 1879, Schoellkopf was willing to allow the State to restore the lower slopes and the rim, this was not carried out in subsequent years.

By 1893, the lower end of Schoellkopf's hydraulic canal showed no attempt at mitigating the visual impact of the companies using his canal, a situation which called for remedy later by the Taft Commission (see text).

(photo: Adams, 1927).



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